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VERIFICATION IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, INCLUDING THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF VERIFICATION

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

CONTENTS

Page

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

Belgium (on behalf of the European Union) 2

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BELGIUM

(On behalf of the European Union)

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The role played by arms limitation and disarmament agreements in furthering peace depends on the ability to obtain adequate guarantees of compliance.

In that respect, verification strengthens security, reduces the risk of misunderstandings and builds mutual confidence that the commitments undertaken will be fulfilled.

Now that the cold war has ended, however, verification no longer consists exclusively in measures that are designed to build mutual confidence or that fall within the sphere of preventive diplomacy. Furthermore, verification does not necessarily have to be accepted by some or even any of the parties engaged in war or conflict.

Some situations may be so destabilizing and hazardous for the entire world or a specific region as to justify the imposition of unilateral measures, i.e., without the party deemed responsible for the situation having given its approval or having even been consulted. The decision to impose such measures, their character (military, economic or otherwise) and the methods of enforcing them can be evaluated only by the United Nations Security Council. The Twelve support the increased potential of the United Nations to actually exact compliance with the Charter in the above-mentioned instances.

The verification and inspections referred to are regarded as indispensable tools of "curative diplomacy". Carefully implemented, they enhance international security and aim to reduce tensions in the region of the State at which they are targeted.

Verification of arms limitation and disarmament agreements can support United Nations activities in various ways: the efforts of the international community and the United Nations now focus on detecting tense situations or crises which are likely to deteriorate into conflict, this being an essential aspect of preventive diplomacy. In that respect, the verification of arms limitation and disarmament agreements allows any aggressive inclinations on the part of a State to be revealed.

Hence, verification regimes, on the condition that they offer the possibility of a suitably reliable and continuous follow-up, make a direct contribution to providing an early warning.

In addition to the open violation of such agreements, the climate in which they are implemented and the willingness of States to accept the rules on transparency required to verify their implementation are indicators of whether a tense situation may emerge.

Whatever the arrangements relating to such agreements, it is therefore essential to bring those indicators rapidly to the attention of the international community and the United Nations in particular.

If a conflict has proved unavoidable and the United Nations is endeavouring to establish and consolidate a cease-fire, the verification of partial arms limitation and disarmament agreements can play a decisive role in allaying tensions. Among parties engaged in war, the acceptability of such agreements, which may cover particularly the withdrawal of certain types of weapons or the establishment of demilitarized zones, depends to a great extent on the verification arrangements accompanying them. The fear of disclosing to the other party military information, which it could use in the event of a renewed outbreak of hostilities, may impede implementation of a verification regime. Third party intervention thus appears to be indispensable in the initial phase. On the other hand, it is desirable to make provision in the medium term for inspectors of the parties involved to be present, which should promote the gradual restoration of a climate of confidence.

Lastly, the verification of arms limitation and disarmament agreements warrants particular attention in the case of States bordering a conflict zone since it is essential in order to prevent the conflict from widening.

The experience acquired in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) prompts the following two comments:

(a) During a crisis period, the validity of commitments undertaken concerning transparency and verification should be constantly reaffirmed;

(b) Continuity can be established between verification operations and observer or inquiry missions that form part of efforts to prevent conflict.

Verification operations can be redirected towards a wider objective in so far as permitted by the agreements to which they correspond.

In the present politico-military situation, the verification methods available to CSCE (inspections, evaluations, the voluntary organization of visits to dispel concern over military activities, and machinery for consultation and cooperation regarding unusual military activities) are increasingly called on to promote conflict prevention and crisis management. Various measures, designed to modify the Vienna Document 1992 with a view to making it more effective under present circumstances, are being discussed in Vienna in the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation. One such measure consists in reconciling verification regimes under the Vienna Document 1992 with those under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The possibility of taking regional measures and measures for stabilization during a crisis period is also being discussed.

Any method of verifying arms limitation or disarmament agreements can also be used in respect of conflict prevention and peace-keeping activities. This is particularly so in the case of:

(a) Ground inspections conducted routinely or following a challenge, of sites identified in advance, military activities or any location likely to be harbouring significant military capabilities. The States parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have acquired extensive experience on ground inspections conducted routinely or following a challenge. Such inspections have proved themselves as an effective verification method and as a powerful confidence-building measure. The Twelve are willing to share this experience with the United Nations in the context of its activities in the field of verification;

(b) Perimeter surveillance methods, which are useful in preventing the introduction of military equipment into a prohibited zone or in monitoring the stockpiling of such equipment in approved locations;

(c) Aerial inspections, particularly to monitor the movements of military forces. The experience gained from implementing the Open Skies Treaty (following its entry into force) could similarly be shared with the United Nations. The Twelve are prepared to cooperate to that end. At a later stage, the establishment of satellite observation methods in a multilateral context could also be considered.